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Transnational turnout. Determinants of emigrant voting in home country elections

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ABSTRACT

A wide majority of countries acknowledge non-resident citizens' right to vote in elections in their country of origin. However, classical turnout theories do not take into account how electoral mobilisation has expanded into a transnational political field that reaches beyond national state borders. This paper analyses the determinants of emigrant turnout based on an original dataset of 25 countries of origin and each of the counties of residence where these voters reside. We find that emigrant communities from developing democracies experience a steep political learning curve that prompts their participation in home country politics, especially if they reside in countries with solid democratic institutions and linkages with their host societies. Our research also shows that remittances not only indicate commitment to family members' welfare in home countries, but positively influence participation in home country politics.

KEYWORDS: transnationalism; turnout; extra-territorial voting; political participation, migration

INTRODUCTION

The participation of emigrants in home country elections exerts a variety of effects on country of origin politics including influence on election results as well as the transnationalisation of party organisation and campaigning (Brand, 2014; Gamlen, 2015; Jaulin, 2016; Østergaard-Nielsen & Ciornei, 2018). Importantly, the study of emigrant turnout highlights the theoretical challenge of how to re-think classical political participation theories in the context of international mobility and citizenship regimes that extend political rights to citizens residing outside national borders. Transnational turnout constitutes an experiment of how voters mobilise when embedded in two political and institutional contexts and accounts for what is resilient and what is adaptable in collective electoral mobilisation when taking into consideration the spatial dimension of national politics beyond borders.

Migratory processes have led to the reconfiguration of the ‘modern geopolitical imagination’, by expanding state policies and identity-making dynamics to groups residing beyond national borders (Gamlen, 2008). A burgeoning literature describes how countries of migrant origin implement policies to engage with their citizens living abroad (Østergaard-Nielsen, 2003; Délano, 2014; Délano & Gamlen, 2014; Pedroza & Palop-García, 2017; Ragazzi, 2014). Such policies intersect with core democratic principles such as political participation and representation (Collyer, 2014). Yet, the question of how emigrants themselves engage with the politics of their country of origin through the electoral channel is still underexplored.

The political mobilisation of external citizens has received some attention in political geography research (see Gamlen 2015). Within migration scholarship an increasing volume of studies seeks to explain emigrant turnout in home country elections (Belchior, Azevedo, Lisi, & Abrantes, 2018; Lafleur & Chelius, 2011; Tintori, 2012) and emigrant political behaviour at the individual level (Ahmadov & Sasse, 2015; Chaudhary, 2017; Escobar, Arana, & McCann, 2015; Morales & Pilati, 2014; Waldinger, 2012). Yet, these studies mainly focus on emigrants from countries of origin with lower levels of economic and democratic development and fail to integrate the broader spectrum of contemporary mobilities, that comprise economic and life-style migration from advanced democracies as well. Moreover, they tend to rely on case-study and small-n comparisons instead of a more systematic approach

to emigrant electoral mobilisation across distinct countries of origin and destination. A recent exception is the contribution of (Burgess & Tyburski, 2017), which focuses on transnational turnout in a larger number of sending countries across time. The authors test various theoretical models of overseas turnout and find that the mobilisation strategies of homeland political parties are the most relevant factor in explaining transnational turnout. Our study complements this research by looking at the turnout of migrant collectives in homeland elections per country of residence. This approach allows us to highlight also the role of the country of residence as well as the bilateral linkages with the country of origin in the transnational mobilisation of emigrant electorates.

This article highlights the role of democratic institutions in influencing the decision of emigrants to participate in the elections of their country of origin. Emigrant policies including the extension of voting rights are not a phenomena only associated with democratic countries of origin (Gamlen, 2008; Pedroza & Palop-García, 2017; Ragazzi, 2014). Nor do emigrants always migrate to countries with higher levels of democracy than can be identified in their country of origin. We find that rather than being caught in a race of institutions in either the country of origin or residence, transnational turnout is shaped by both political and institutional contexts as well as by the linkages between the two. Emigrant communities from developing democracies experience a steep political learning curve that prompts their participation in home country politics, especially if they reside in countries with solid democratic institutions and linkages with their home societies. Our research also qualifies existing arguments regarding the connection between remittances and home country political engagement (Boccagni, Lafleur, & Levitt, 2016; Burgess, 2014; O'Mahony, 2013). We show that remittances not only indicate commitment to family members' welfare in home countries, but positively influence levels of emigrant participation in home country politics. The article draws on an original dataset of the aggregate turnout of emigrated citizens and its determinants in 25 countries from Europe, Africa and Latin America (Table A1 in Appendix) and uses multilevel estimations with emigrant communities nested in both countries of origin and destination.

TURNOUT THEORY AND VOTING FROM ABROAD

Aggregate turnout is a measure that captures the health of a particular electoral system better than analysis based on individual political participation which is more sensitive to subjective factors (Franklin, 2004). While the link between socio-economic resources and

individual political participation is a well-established argument in the literature, turnout related research tends to focus on contextual, system-level aspects that increase electoral participation independently of individual circumstances (Blais, 2006; Geys, 2006; Mattila, 2003). We take stock of this research by following two interrelated strands of inquiry. First, which political factors from the country of origin and destination determine transnational turnout. Second, the role of transnational relations between the two countries in shaping the turnout of citizens residing abroad.

Political factors and transnational turnout

A key political factor that has been associated with electoral mobilisation is the quality of democracy in a country (Fornos et al, 2004). A robust democratic system allows citizens to freely participate in elections and to become ‘acquainted with the rituals and traditions of voting’ (ibid, p. 921). There is an ample political socialization literature on how the receiving state democratic system and the immigrant opportunity structure shape migrants’ scope and forms of civic and political engagement (Cho et al, 2006; Jones-Correa, 2001; Landolt & Goldring, 2009).

The impact of the receiving context on migrants’ political engagement in their country of origin has been subject to competing arguments. Relying on a zero-sum logic, some scholars argue that an inclusive context of reception trumps migrants’ engagement in homeland politics and stimulates their political participation in the context of reception (Chaudhary, 2017; Eduardo Guarnizo, Portes, & Haller, 2015; Morales & Pilati, 2014). In contrast, a perspective stressing the complementarity of migrant participation in the residence and homeland contexts supports that more democratic countries of residence offer opportunities for migrant political engagement, which spill over into democratic participation transnationally. For instance, Ahmadov & Sasse (2015) find that Ukrainian migrants’ transnational participation is strongly correlated with the quality of democracy in the context of residence. A similarly positive connection between democratic quality and transnational political participation is suggested by the literature on multicultural policies in advanced democracies (Banting & Kymlicka, 2013; Wright & Bloemraad, 2012). These authors argue that far from retreating from multiculturalism, Western countries have been maintaining multicultural policies that foster migrants’ linkages with their culture (and country) of origin. Acknowledging the complementarity hypothesis, Wright and Bloemraad (2012) show that multiculturalism does

not undermine migrants' social and political integration in the host society and in many cases may actually encourage it. The zero sum and complementarity logics have been employed relative to migrant political behaviour at the individual level. We test their explanatory power in relation to collective electoral participation by proposing the following hypothesis: *turnout in home country elections is higher for emigrant communities residing in more democratic countries of residence (H1a)*.

However, political skills are not only about what migrants learn, but also about what they bring with them. Migrants coming from more democratic contexts have a stronger set of participatory skills than those coming from less democratic regimes (Almond & Verba, 1963; Rice & Feldman, 1997).¹ At the same time, emigrants coming from less democratic countries have higher incentives to mobilise politically in order to contribute to the democratic process back home (Bermúdez, Lafleur, & Escrivá, 2017), while emigrants from more advanced democracies may find no compelling reason to make a statement in homeland politics. In order to evaluate these alternative explanations, we test if *transnational turnout is higher in the case of emigrants coming from advanced democracies (H1b)*.

The democratic context in home countries can be expected to condition the extent to which the context of reception constitutes an opportunity for transnational turnout. In a highly democratic context of reception, migrants coming from countries of origin characterised by low democratic quality, have a steeper political learning curve than those from more advanced democracies. Moreover, highly democratic countries of residence provide a starker contrast to homeland political regimes plagued by an ill-functioning democracy. Thus, the receiving context is an opportunity to engage with the political development back home in particular for migrants who originate in less developed democracies. We therefore estimate if the *effect of country of residence democratic institutions on transnational turnout is higher for emigrants originating in less developed democracies (H1c)*.

Transnational turnout and host-home country linkages

Transnational turnout calls for an understanding of how democratic participation works when related to national contexts that are not only separated by borders, but also linked through

¹ While the comparison of advanced and developing democracies is one of the main contributions of our article, we acknowledge that it needs further qualification since most of turnout theories have been developed and tested on advanced democracies. Further research should consider if there are any particularities related to developing democracies and turnout that need additional hypotheses not considered by existing research.

cultural, political and economic relations. Recent research shows that postcolonial relations between home and host countries have a positive influence on political participation from abroad given the shared cultural norms vis-a-vis politics between origin and destination (Chaudhary, 2017). Additionally, stronger economic relations, such as bilateral trade, between the country of origin and destination can also contribute to higher transnational participation rates. Economic linkages offer migrants more opportunities to be engaged in foreign direct investment from the country of residence to the country of origin by promoting information and by connecting economic actors from both countries (Javorcik, Özden, Spatareanu, & Neagu, 2011; Nijkamp, Gheasi, & Rietveld, 2011), a fact which further spills over into transnational political engagement (Ahmadov & Sasse, 2015). *We expect that stronger economic links between the countries of origin and destination are positively correlated with transnational turnout (H2a).*

A similar argument can be made regarding political ties. Close political ties and relations between the country of origin and residence may render the political developments in the homeland consequential for the political or economic situation in the country of residence. Such political proximity not only means that the political situation in the homeland is high up on the political agenda in the country of residence, but also that emigrants may no longer compartmentalize their interests as related to either 'here' or 'there'. One indicator of these links are regional integration processes which has spread widely in the past decades, ranging from the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) to Mercado Común del Sur (Mercosur) or African Union (AU) and culminating with the most complex form of regional organization - the European Union (EU). The political and social linkages that stem from regional integration may have a positive impact on transnational participation since the country of origin and destination are seen as part of a larger political community with common historic and cultural roots. Following these arguments, we hypothesize *that emigrants residing in countries that have political links with their country of origin have a higher turnout in homeland elections (H2b).*

Home country political institutions also condition the extent to which home-host country linkages translate into a broader political commitment at the transnational level. Home-host country linkages constitute an opportunity for transnational electoral engagement especially in the case of migrants coming from developing democracies, since they facilitate political learning in the broader context of the country of residence. In the case of migrants that

have been socialised in a context with strong democratic institutions, their transnational engagement is less affected by the context of destination and the connections that this develops with the country of origin. Similarly, our theoretical expectation is that, the *effect of linkages between origin and destination on transnational turnout is conditioned by the quality of democracy in home countries (H2c)*.

While the political and economic linkages are state-driven phenomena, immigrants themselves become important actors of connecting their countries of origin and destination through their economic, social and political remittances (Ahmadov & Sasse, 2015; Boccagni et al., 2016; Burgess, 2014; Levitt, 1998; Meseguer & Burgess, 2014). Voting from abroad is part of the broader array of social and political remittances, i.e., migration-driven ideas, values and norms, attitudes, practices whose primary impact is on the country of origin's civic and political sphere (Boccagni et al., 2016). The question remains to what extent economic remittances also tie in with a stronger commitment to participate in broader political processes such as the use of the vote in national elections (Burgess 2014). In that respect it is important to flag that different dynamics can be at play. Economic remittances can primarily be seen as an indicator of migrants' financial commitment to their family back home. However, such commitment may be accompanied with a stronger interest in the broader democratic processes in which their families reside. More politically motivated emigration characterized by higher levels of education may render those emigrants more able to send remittances and at the same time already have a stronger predisposition to engage with politics in the homeland. We test whether *emigrants from countries of residence that send higher levels of economic remittances are also those that are more engaged in transnational electoral participation (H2d)*.

Home country political institutions may also condition the extent to which economic remittances influence such broader political commitment at the transnational level. Emigrant communities coming from less developed democracies may possess a smaller toolkit and interest for transnational political participation. Nevertheless, they can become important social actors back home through the economic impact of their remittances, which in turn empowers them to question how the political system works and how well it provides for the welfare of non-migrant families. A different dynamic leading to the same positive relationship between remittances and turnout would be at play for those emigrants who mainly leave for political reasons as indicated above. In either scenario, the theoretical expectation is that, the *effect of*

economic remittances on transnational turnout is conditioned by the quality of democracy in home countries (H2e).

DATA AND METHOD

The study of transnational turnout suffers from various data availability limitations as few countries register or release data on voter turnout per country of residence. Most countries granting external voting rights, such as the United Kingdom or Spain, register the vote in the last district of residence of emigrants and do not keep statistics on which countries of residence these votes come from. Moreover, there is no information on the basic demographics and socio-economic profile of the emigrant voters per country of residence. In order to account for transnational turnout, we searched official data on emigrant participation by country of residence for each of the countries granting external voting rights according to Ellis (2007). From 100 countries surveyed, data has been found for 27 countries covering elections between 2009-2016. However, complete data, including all the independent variables, has only been found for 25 countries (see table A1).

The challenge of measuring transnational turnout

The number of emigrant voters per country of residence is based on the official publications of the Ministry of Interior/Electoral Commissions of each country of origin in the study. The calculation of turnout, however, presents a challenge. The most frequent definition of turnout is the share of the population who voted over the total number of voting-age population in a given area. Other ways of measuring turnout consider the share of people who voted over the number of registered voters or even over the absolute number of votes cast on the election day (Geys, 2006, p. 638). The measurement of transnational turnout cannot follow these classical procedures because information on voting age migrant population per country of residence is not available for the large majority of sending countries included in this study. Taking into consideration these data availability constraints, transnational turnout is calculated as the share of migrants in a particular country of residence who cast a vote in the last country of origin election over the total number of emigrants who are registered in that country of residence. For instance, the number of Ecuadorians in France who vote over the overall population of Ecuadorians residing in France.

Hence, for the estimation of emigrant population per country of residence, we use two sources: the United Nations (UN) Migrant Stock Data closest to election year (United Nations, 2010, 2013 and 2015) and the country of origin consular registers where they are available. The UN Migrant Stock reports the number of foreign-born citizens in each country and has the advantage of applying similar methodologies of data collection across states. However, this data may lead to an underestimation of transnational turnout, as the figure of potential voters comprises population under 18 years of age. Moreover, it does not account for second-generation migrants who have the right to vote in the country of origin. This is especially relevant for countries with a long-standing emigration trajectory such as Italy and Turkey, where the number of potential voters exceeds the pool of first generation migrants in a country. In order to address this shortcoming, we use the consular register of national citizens living abroad in the countries that make it available (for an overview, see Table A1). However, the consular data also poses problems since registration and de-registration are, for most countries, voluntary. For instance, the number of registered voters can be too low because emigrants are reluctant to register with the country of origin authorities abroad for various reasons (Belchior et al., 2018; Bermúdez et al., 2017; Lafleur & Sánchez-Domínguez, 2015). Therefore the use of consular data may lead to both underestimation and overestimation of the number of emigrants from one country of origin, depending on its emigration characteristics (Dumont & Lemaître, 2005).

For robustness considerations, our estimations are therefore based on both of the two aforementioned statistics in the calculation of transnational turnout: First, one that takes emigrant population data from the UN Migrant Stock dataset and a second one that combines consular registers when available and the UN Migrant Stock for those countries where consular registers are not available.²

Explanatory variables

Political variables are estimated relying on various sources such as election results, the Database of Political Institutions (DPI) (Cruz, Keefer, & Scartascini, 2015), the Quality of Government Dataset (QoG) (Teorell, Charron, Samanni, Holmberg, & Rothstein, 2011) and the Polity IV Project (Marshall, 2017). The quality of democracy in host and home country

² The countries of residence where the number of voters is larger than the emigrant population provided by any of the sources mentioned above have been discarded from the analysis.

respectively are based on the Polity IV score which measure regime authority from -10 (hereditary monarchy) to +10 (consolidated democracy) (Marshall, 2017).

With regard to links between the countries of origin and destination, we use various measures. Economic linkages are measured as bilateral trade relative to election year and indicate the sum of exports and imports between origin and destination (IMF, 2013). In the analysis we use the variable on the logarithmic scale. Political links are operationalised as joint membership of the country of origin and destination in one of the following supranational organisations: ASEAN, AU, EU and Mercosur. Emigrant remittances refer to the emigrant-led financial transactions from the country of residence to the country of origin (World Bank, 2013, 2015, 2016). The measurement of remittances at the community level poses various challenges when used in a comparative framework, because aggregate figures per country of residence depend on emigrant population size in the country of residence. Moreover, the same amount of remittances may mean something very different for the recipients in countries with high or low GDP per capita. In order to get a better sense of remittances as link and commitment, we use the share of remittances per capita (the ratio between the total remittances volume and number of migrants from a country of residence) divided by the country of origin GDP per capita (World Bank, 2018). This measure is an indicator of emigrants' commitment to kin members back home relative to their economic needs (Burgess 2014: 17).

Control variables

Several scholars argue that there is a clear connection between electoral competition and turnout, with closer races having higher turnout rates (Blais, 2006; Geys, 2006). In a transnational setting, country of origin politics can become salient and influence emigrant voter mobilisation through homeland party outreach (Burgess, 2018; Burgess & Tyburski, 2017; Mencutec & Baser, 2018; Østergaard-Nielsen & Ciornei, 2018; Paarlberg, 2019) or because technological development allows emigrant voters to follow political news from their country of origin and take the pulse of electoral dynamics back home (Metykova, 2010; Oiarzabal & Reips, 2012). In this article, electoral competition is based on *ex-post* election results (Geys, 2006) and is calculated as the difference in percentages obtained by the first and second ranked party.

The administrative requirements of voting have been identified as central factors for turnout (Blais & Dobrzynska, 1998; Franklin, 2004; Powell, 1986). Case-studies of elections

abroad show how states create bureaucratic barriers to the exercise of the external vote, such as tight registration deadline and cumbersome paperwork (Hutcheson & Arrighi, 2015; Jaulin, 2016; Lafleur & Chelius, 2011). We control for these factors by creating a registration variable which takes the value 1 if no registration is required, 2 if migrants are required to register only once in the electoral roll and 3 if registration is requested before each election. Also, different modalities of voting for citizens abroad may influence turnout (Hutcheson & Arrighi, 2015). Voting in person at embassies and consulates may hamper external voting especially in the case of external communities that live far away from the voting polls. In contrast, postal voting strongly reduces the time and money that the emigrant voter must spend in order to vote from afar. E-voting has a similarly positive effect, although very few countries allow it (Hutcheson and Arrighi, 2015). The generosity of voting modalities is a dummy that takes the value of 1 if at least one of the following is available: postal, electronic or proxy voting.

A series of socio-economic factors significantly influence aggregate electoral mobilisation. Economic development facilitates turnout by allowing citizens to be more informed and engaged in politics and its effect is net of the level of democratisation (Blais & Dobrzynska, 1998; Powell, 1982). We measure this variable as the natural logarithm of GDP per capita according to the World Bank Per capita GDP at Current Prices dataset relative to election year. District and population size constitute another category of socio-economic explanations of turnout, with smaller communities having higher participation rates (Dahl & Tufte, 1973). We control for the size of the emigrant community in the country of destination, which we estimate as the natural logarithm of the total number of emigrants based on UN data and UN and consular registers respectively. Population stability in a district has been found to positively impact on electoral turnout (Hoffman-Martinot 1994). The stability of the emigrant community is calculated as the ratio between the number of residents per destination country in the election year and in the year 2000 according to the UN Migrant Stock data.

A summary table with variables measured on their natural scale (non-standardized values) is provided in Table A2 in Appendix.

Estimation strategy

The statistical strategy is to estimate cross-classified multilevel models with random intercepts required by the nested structure of the data (Goldstein, 1994). In these models, lower units do not belong to one higher level unit but to several. In our cases, migrant communities

(level-1) belong to both countries of origin (level-2) and destination (level-2) respectively, as there is no hierarchical ordering between the two countries (Leckie 2013). For example Ecuadorians in France (level-1) are nested in Ecuador and France respectively (level-2). These models also account for any unspecified factors related to the country of residence and destination respectively by estimating random intercepts at both levels. The number of countries of origin (25) is over the 20 level-2 unit mark found by Stegmueller (2013).

Following Papke and Wooldridge (1993) we estimate general linear models based on maximum likelihood given that our dependent variable is a fractional response that is constrained to take only values between 0 and 1 rendering linear estimations inappropriate. All continuous independent variables have been standardised in order to assure a smoother estimation of the regression coefficients. The estimations use the ‘lme4’ package in R (glmer function) and the procedure for fractional response models with cross-classified data and random intercepts (Bates, Maelcher, Bolker, & Walker, 2015).

In order to account for the correlation of some of the explanatory variables and selection bias, we offer alternative models. Linkages between origin and destination are not separate entities. Countries with denser economic linkages tend to establish stronger political links and vice-versa. Emigrants also tend to be attracted to countries that have connections or present familiarity with the country of origin. The volume of remittances from one country of residence is determined by emigrant community size, which in turn, is influenced by the pre-existing linkages between origin and destination. Although we correct for this selection bias by estimating remittances per capita and not remittances volume, we present separate models with these variables introduced separately.³

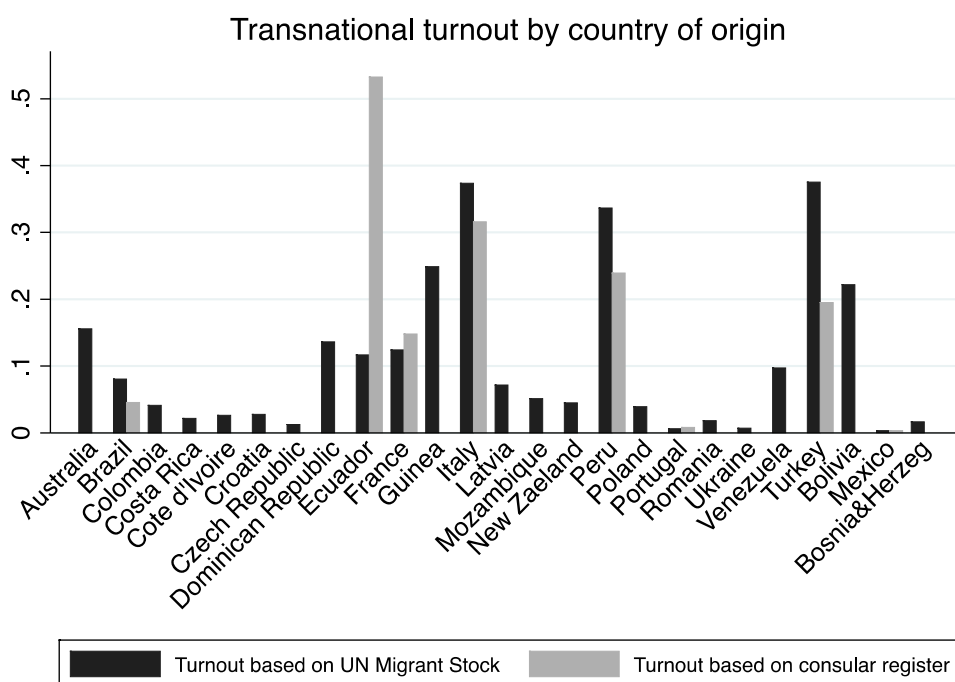
FINDINGS

Transnational turnout varies greatly across countries of origin, from as little as 0.3 per cent in Mexico to almost 40 per cent in Italy (Figure 1) and more than 50 per cent when

³ In subsequent estimations we have also introduced additional control variables that may be confounders for transnational turnout. These include concurrent elections, type of election (presidential/parliamentary), linguistic ties between origin and destination and special representation (Chaudhary, 2017; Fornos, Power, & Garand, 2004; Hutcheson & Arrighi, 2015, Collyer, 2014). Since these variables are not significant, we choose to present the simpler version of the models. The results are available upon request.

considering the Ecuadorian emigrant register.⁴ A clear geographical pattern cannot be identified, albeit newer democracies from Eastern Europe tend to be located at the lower end of the spectre. This finding is corroborated by other studies regarding the high levels of political disaffection in Eastern Europe, caused by lower democratic quality, corruption and the lack of trust in politicians and political institutions (Kostadinova, 2003). The tenure of external voting rights does not immediately show a correlation with turnout levels, since external communities such as the French and Peruvian can be located at the higher end of the scale, despite the decade-long gap in their experience with external voting rights legislation. As the subsequent analysis shows, institutional procedures related to the external vote are key factors in explaining transnational turnout. Another indicator which may explain the differences in turnout observed in Figure 1, is the transnational mobilisation activity of homeland political parties (Burgess and Tyburski 2017). However, we cannot consider this dimension in this analysis given the lack of data at the country of residence level.

Figure 1. Transnational turnout by country of origin



⁴ The large difference between turnout based on UN data and consular register respectively in the case of Ecuador is explained by the larger stock of Ecuadorians abroad in the consular register in comparison to those counted by the UN register. The numbers reported by the Ecuadorian register of citizens abroad are the sum of emigrated Ecuadorians to countries of destination between 2000-2013. The opposite occurs in the cases of Peru and Turkey, where the consular registers count less external citizens than the UN data, most likely explained by the reluctance or avoidance to register with home country authorities.

Transnational turnout and the home-host country context

Table 1 presents the estimates of four multilevel general linear models that test the hypotheses proposed in the previous section. Given the correlation between political linkages, economic linkages and remittances per capita, we estimate the effect of these variables in separate models (M1-M3) (see also Table A4 for the correlation matrix).

The model associated with political factors clearly illustrates the dual embeddedness of transnational turnout in host and home country settings. The quality of democracy in the context of residence has a positive main effect on transnational turnout, confirming the migrant political learning theory and the complementarity of host and home country political engagement (H1a). Transnational electoral mobilisation is a consequence of political socialisation in a democratic context rather than a zero sum game between various arenas of political participation. This result shows that the effect of host country political institutions can be observed also in aggregate mobilisation in home country elections, albeit its effect is mediated by the democratic quality in the country of origin, as we shall report further below. The political variables related to the country of origin do not have a main effect on transnational turnout, failing to confirm H1b and H1d, but in line with the findings of Chaudhary (2017) in relation to immigrant political participation at the individual level. Instead, the quality of democracy conditions the effect of host country democratic quality and emigrant remittances as we shall see in Table 2.

Linkages between home and host countries are significant and positive in relation to transnational turnout, confirming H2a-H2d. When calculating predicted values, turnout increases from three to 17 per cent between countries with a low volume of bilateral trade (8 million \$) and those with a very high one (500,000 million \$). Additionally, political linkages exert a positive effect on transnational turnout, though their effect magnitude is conditioned by home country democratic development as we show in the next section (Table 2). Arguably there is here a selection bias whereby migrants choose destinations with ties to their homeland rendering their homeland political engagement more likely. Emigrant remittances are also positively correlated with turnout, and their effect remains significant after controlling for the volume of economic transactions between home and host societies. This finding shows that the relationship between remittances and turnout is not merely an indicator of broader linkages and transnational participation, but also an explanatory factor in its own right (see also Burgess 2014).

Table 1. Multilevel general linear estimations of transnational turnout (emigrant population based on the UN Migrant Stock data) *p < .1; **p < .05; ***p < .01

	(1A)		(2A)		(3A)		(4A)	
	<i>Beta</i>	<i>S.E</i>	<i>Beta</i>	<i>S.E</i>	<i>Beta</i>	<i>S.E</i>	<i>Beta</i>	<i>S.E</i>
Quality of democracy in CoR	0.313***	(0.073)	0.282***	(0.076)	0.296***	(0.075)	0.304***	(0.073)
Quality of democracy in CoO	-0.268	(0.188)	-0.315	(0.195)	-0.509	(0.331)	-0.468	(0.323)
Bilateral trade	0.297***	(0.069)					0.268***	(0.070)
Political links			0.284***	(0.105)				
Emigrant remittances per capita					0.238***	(0.068)	0.216***	(0.068)
Electoral competition in CoO	-0.027	(0.223)	-0.036	(0.233)	0.074	(0.285)	0.075	(0.278)
Postal/e-vote	1.609***	(0.611)	1.547**	(0.639)	1.610**	(0.639)	1.635***	(0.623)
Registration: Once								
No registration	-1.001	(0.955)	-1.051	(1.001)	-0.737	(1.025)	-0.766	(0.999)
Registration before each election	-2.302***	(0.727)	-2.162***	(0.762)	-2.066***	(0.773)	-2.132***	(0.754)
CoR GDP per capita	0.016	(0.071)	0.046	(0.071)	0.046	(0.071)	0.008	(0.071)
CoO GDP per capita	-0.392*	(0.200)	-0.252	(0.207)	-0.106	(0.247)	-0.224	(0.243)
Community size in CoR	-1.123***	(0.062)	-0.978***	(0.050)	-0.913***	(0.048)	-1.086***	(0.063)
Community change	0.143***	(0.036)	0.126***	(0.036)	0.134***	(0.036)	0.146***	(0.036)
Constant	-2.657***	(0.291)	-2.739***	(0.305)	-2.673***	(0.303)	-2.651***	(0.295)
N	941		967		955		932	
CoO random int. variance	0.77		0.33		0.33		0.28	
CoR random int. variance	0.27		0.24		0.83		0.79	
Adjusted ICC	0.19		0.21		0.21		0.19	
Marginal R2	0.128		0.126		0.124		0.128	
Conditional R2	0.340		0.348		0.343		0.340	
AIC	13,113.530		13,359.020		13,203.620		12,991.890	
BIC	13,186.230		13,432.140		13,276.550		13,069.290	

Note: the number of observations varies between models due to missing values on bilateral trade (M1, M4); CoO=country of origin; CoR=country of residence; Countries=25

In relation to control variables, electoral competition in the country of origin is not significantly correlated to transnational turnout. Despite increasing transnational party outreach, close electoral races are not equally played out at home and abroad. Registration requirements are highly correlated with emigrant voting in home country elections. We use as baseline value one-time registration since it is the most common among our cases and observe that comparatively, the requirement to register before each election negatively influences the vote from abroad. Voting modalities facilitating voting, such as postal, electronic or proxy voting, positively impacts turnout.

The socio-economic controls reveal further dynamics related to electoral mobilization from abroad. The economic prosperity of host countries is not significantly associated with emigrants being engaged in the political process. This indicates that it is the political milieu rather than the economic context of host societies that affects transnational political participation. Moreover, the economic situation in the country of origin is not significant for transnational participation across the models. This supports the claim that a depressed economic situation back home animates emigrants to mobilise in order to bring change (Bermúdez et al., 2017). Regarding, the size of emigrant community per country of residence, we find that smaller communities are also those that have a higher degree of transnational mobilisation. Recent emigration communities mobilise more than the long-standing ones, showing the fading effect of homeland political ties over time (see also Burgess and Tyburski 2017).

The conditional effect of the home country context

The country of origin level of democracy does not have a main effect on turnout, but it conditions the extent to which other factors, such as the quality of democracy in the country of residence and linkages between origin and destination, influence transnational turnout (Table 2). As Model 5A indicates, the interaction between the quality of democracy in home and host country is significant and negative, confirming H1c. The quality of democracy in the receiving country has the highest impact on transnational turnout for emigrant communities coming from less democratic countries of origin (Figure A2).

Table 2. Conditional effects of home country quality of democracy on transnational turnout. *p < .1; **p < .05; ***p < .01

	(5A)		(6A)	
	<i>Beta</i>	<i>S.E</i>	<i>Beta</i>	<i>S.E</i>
Quality of democracy in CoR	0.299***	(0.072)	0.278***	(0.075)
Quality of democracy in CoO	-0.421	(0.324)	-0.461	(0.340)
Bilateral trade	0.267***	(0.069)		
Political links			0.306***	(0.105)
Emigrant remittances per capita	0.218***	(0.068)	0.235***	(0.068)
Quality of democracy in CoO* Quality of democracy in CoR	-0.138**	(0.057)		
Quality of democracy in CoO* Political links			-0.370***	(0.139)
Electoral competition in CoO	0.078	(0.278)	0.065	(0.293)
Postal/e-voting	1.628***	(0.623)	1.483**	(0.656)
Registration requirements: once				
No registration	-0.787	(1.000)	-0.743	(1.053)
Registration before each election	-2.133***	(0.754)	-1.898**	(0.794)
CoR GDPpc	0.010	(0.070)	0.094	(0.073)
CoO GDPpc	-0.227	(0.243)	-0.038	(0.254)
Community size	-1.072***	(0.063)	-0.961***	(0.050)
Community change	0.144***	(0.035)	0.132***	(0.035)
Constant	-2.637***	(0.295)	-2.722***	(0.311)
N	932		955	
CoO random int. variance	0.78		0.33	
CoR random int. variance	0.27		0.87	
Adjusted ICC	0.19		0.17	
Marginal R2	0.129		0.127	
Conditional R2	0.339		0.348	
AIC	12,987.990		13,194.020	
BIC	13,070.220		13,276.670	

Note: the number of observations varies between models due to missing values on bilateral trade; CoO=country of origin; CoR=country of residence; Countries=25

In highly democratic countries of residence, there is a ‘learning curve’ of transnational political participation that is much steeper for emigrants coming from low-ranked democracies than those from the high-ranked ones. Calculating the predicted values gives a clearer understanding of this dynamic: For emigrants coming from authoritarian countries of origin (-10 polity score), transnational turnout increases from three per cent to 34 per cent when the democracy score in the country of origin increases from -10 to 10. For emigrants coming from advanced democracies (10 polity score), transnational turnout increases from three per cent to seven per cent when moving from the lowest to the highest value of democracy in the country of residence. Consequently, the democratic quality in the country of residence has a limited effect for the electoral mobilisation of emigrants coming from advanced democracies and a strong effect for those communities coming from autocracies and undeveloped democracies.

A similar dynamic occurs in the case of political links.⁵ These links have a weaker effect on transnational turnout for emigrants coming from developing democracies. Transnational turnout increases from 26 per cent to 59 per cent when emigrants from autocratic regimes (-10 polity score) reside in countries without and with political links with home country respectively. Emigrant communities originating in advanced democracies (10 polity score) experience hardly any change in the amount of transnational mobilisation when living in countries with and without political links. Their turnout is around 6 per cent in both cases (Figure A3).

For summary statistics, we present stepwise regressions in Table A4. The intraclass correlation coefficient (ICC) confirms the appropriateness of multilevel modelling for our data by indicating ‘the proportion of the variance explained by the grouping structure in the population’ (Hox 2002). We present adjusted ICC, which is recommended for data that does not have a Gaussian distribution (Nakagawa, Johnson, & Schielzeth, 2017). Indeed, 29 per cent of the variance is explained by the grouping of emigrant communities in countries of residence and origin respectively (null model), this proportion decreasing to 19 per cent when explanatory variables are added. As regards the proportion of variance explained, we calculate marginal and conditional R² as established by (Nakagawa et al., 2017). The former is associated with fixed effects, while the latter take into account both fixed and random effects.

⁵ The interactions between quality of democracy in the country of origin and bilateral trade and remittance per capita respectively are not significant; results available upon request.

The values of marginal R2 show that despite its significance level, the quality of democracy in the countries of residence alone explains less than 1 per cent of the variation. This proportion increases to three per cent when we add the variables related to the country of origin and to eight per cent when the institutional characteristics of the vote from abroad are added. The socio-economic controls add four percentages more to the proportion of variation explained. Overall, the fixed and random effects of the full model explain 34 per cent of the variation, as indicated by the conditional R2 value. These results show that when comparing the determinants of transnational turnout, the institutional variables explain a larger portion of the variation than the quality of democracy in the country of residence or linkages between origin and destination. The information criteria parameters (AIC and BIC) also indicate that the full model should be chosen over the others.

Robustness checks

Since UN Migrant Stock data may underestimate the number of potential voters in a country of residence, we test the hypotheses proposed based on a combination of consular registers available in eight countries of origin and the UN migrant data in the countries that do not have such registers. Thus, transnational turnout, emigrant community size and remittances per capita relative to home country GDP per capita are calculated also on the basis of population figures reported by these two sources. The results are presented in Table 4 and do not present major differences in comparison to the models that estimate turnout based only on the UN Migrant stock data. The quality of democracy in the country of destination has a positive effect on transnational turnout. (Models 1B-3B). Sustained economic and political interactions between origin and destination positively affect citizen participation at the transnational level, similarly to the results presented in Table 3. The country of origin democratic development mediates the relationship between host country quality of democracy and political linkages, with the highest impact for less developed democracies of origin (Model 3B). Although it is not significant, the interaction between the country of origin and residence quality of democracy is negative, suggesting a similar dynamic proposed by hypothesis H1c. However, due to the lack of significance, we cannot generalise this finding to a sample of countries greater than the ones included in the analysis here.

Table 4. Multilevel general linear estimations of transnational turnout (emigrant population based on the UN Migrant Stock data and consular registers). *p < .1; **p < .05; ***p < .01

	(1B)		(2B)		(3B)	
	<i>Beta</i>	<i>S.E</i>	<i>Beta</i>	<i>S.E</i>	<i>Beta</i>	<i>S.E</i>
CoR quality of democracy	0.225***	(0.067)	0.219***	(0.066)	0.199***	(0.069)
CoO quality of democracy	-0.347	(0.315)	-0.318	(0.315)	-0.343	(0.333)
Bilateral trade	0.317***	(0.065)	0.319***	(0.064)		
Political links					0.320***	(0.102)
Remittances per capita	0.130***	(0.046)	0.127***	(0.046)	0.169***	(0.046)
CoO quality of democracy* CoR quality of democracy			-0.087	(0.055)		
CoO quality of democracy* political links					-0.405***	(0.137)
Electoral competition in CoO	0.110	(0.272)	0.113	(0.271)	0.101	(0.286)
Postal/e-vote	1.723***	(0.608)	1.720***	(0.607)	1.558**	(0.641)
No registration	-0.927	(0.976)	-0.943	(0.973)	-0.904	(1.027)
Registration before each election	-2.223***	(0.736)	-2.225***	(0.734)	-1.953**	(0.776)
CoR GDPpc	0.099	(0.064)	0.102	(0.064)	0.201***	(0.067)
CoO GDPpc	-0.363	(0.236)	-0.367	(0.236)	-0.149	(0.247)
Community size	-1.148***	(0.061)	-1.141***	(0.061)	-0.994***	(0.050)
Community change	0.147***	(0.035)	0.146***	(0.035)	0.132***	(0.035)
Constant	-2.545***	(0.286)	-2.537***	(0.286)	-2.627***	(0.302)
N	955		955		979	
CoO random int. variance	0.76		0.74		0.83	
CoR random int. variance	0.18		0.17		0.22	
ICC	0.17		0.17		0.14	
Marginal R2	0.12		0.12		0.11	
Conditional R2	0.31		0.31		0.32	
AIC	13,340.630		13,340.170		13,569.410	
BIC	13,418.420		13,422.820		13,652.480	

Note: the number of observations varies between models due to missing values on bilateral trade; CoO=country of origin; CoR=country of residence; Countries=25.

Because of the wide spectrum of home countries, migration patterns may differ between advanced and developing democracies, a fact which may influence transnational turnout. Given the lack of data on migrant population per country of residence, we construct an indicator variable for the age structure of emigrant population for the countries of origin in the dataset. This is based on the Migration in OECD countries database which contains an estimation of migrant population per country of birth and age groups (15-24, 25-64, older than 64) in OECD countries. While this does not cover all the emigrant population from one country of origin, OECD countries receive the largest share of international migrants and can therefore be

considered an adequate indicator of the age structure of the_emigrant population from a particular country of origin. We control for the percentage of these age groups in order to account for the different age patterns and their effect on transnational turnout. The results indicate that the findings in Models 1A-4A are robust even after controlling for the age structure of emigrant population in OECD countries of residence.

Table 5. Multilevel general linear estimations of transnational turnout (additional age controls). *p < .1; **p < .05; ***p < .01

	(1C)	
	<i>Beta</i>	<i>S.E</i>
Quality of democracy in CoR	0.301***	(0.072)
Quality of democracy in CoO	0.179	(0.390)
Bilateral trade	0.264***	(0.069)
Emigrant remittances	0.218***	(0.068)
Electoral competition in CoO	-0.276	(0.239)
Postal/e-vote	2.232***	(0.511)
No registration	-0.174	(0.796)
Registration before each election	-3.949***	(0.866)
CoR GDP per capita	0.009	(0.070)
CoO GDP per capita	-0.697**	(0.318)
Community size in CoR	-1.077***	(0.063)
Community change	0.147***	(0.036)
Perc pop 18-24 in OECD CoR	0.126***	(0.046)
Perc pop 25-64 in OECD CoR	0.024	(0.022)
Constant	-6.551***	(1.360)
N	932	
CoO random int. variance	0.46	
CoR random int. variance	0.27	
ICC	0.14	
Marginal R2	0.16	
Conditional R2	0.34	
AIC	12,983.340	
BIC	13,070.410	

Note: CoO=country of origin; CoR=country of residence; Countries=25.

CONCLUSIONS

Voter turnout increasingly takes place across borders in the context of international mobility and expanding voting and representation rights for citizens living abroad. The manifold effects of emigrant voting on home country politics can be expected to intensify due to increasing international migration and technological advances that facilitate emigrant linkages with countries of origin. These effects range from swaying electoral results and government coalitions, influencing kin voters at home and contributing to democratization processes and to the emergence of transnational party campaigning and infrastructure (Brand, 2014; Gamlen, 2015; Østergaard-Nielsen & Ciornei, 2018). More importantly, expatriate voting is a feature of both advanced and developing democracies. By including both sets of democracies, this analysis strengthens our understanding of how different political regimes impact migrant transnational electoral behaviour. Beyond its political implications, the study of transnational turnout is a welcome opportunity to inquire how the classical concept of voter mobilisation navigates between a bounded nation-state territory and political spaces that are created and sustained by states and migrants beyond national borders. In this optic, transnational turnout constitutes an experiment about what is resilient and what is adaptable in political communities' electoral mobilisation once their spatial and socio-political contexts change.

We find that the higher the level of quality of democracy in the country of residence the larger the turnout of emigrants in homeland elections. This suggests that the political learning process adjacent to migration is broader than the exclusive socialization into host country politics. However, this effect is largely determined by the places of origin of emigrant communities. Emigrants coming from developing democracies experience a steep learning curve which prompts them to vote in home country elections, while almost no effect of the country of destination democratic institutions is observed for the political participation of emigrants from advanced democracies. These findings point to the resilience of democratic skills and their robustness when confronted with more authoritarian residence contexts, but also the inspirational role that advanced democratic systems play in fostering the transnational political participation of emigrants from less democratic countries.

Similarly, the transnational linkages between the country of origin and destination positively contribute to emigrants' participation in home country elections. This finding goes beyond recent studies that focus on how either home country policies (Gamlen, 2008; Pedroza & Palop-García, 2017; Ragazzi, 2014) or host country political context (Ahmadov & Sasse, 2015; Escobar et al., 2015; Morales & Pilati, 2014) shape emigrant political engagement. Our findings highlight that the political space that is related to emigrant political participation should not be conceived as contained by the societies of origin and destination respectively, but as a transnational space that unfolds and is sustained by economic, political and cultural linkages (Chaudhary, 2017; Wimmer & Glick-Schiller, 2002). Moreover, the findings underscore the dynamic between different types of migrant-led practices in transnational spaces such as remittances and voting (Boccagni et al., 2016; Burgess, 2014; O'Mahony, 2013).

The transnational perspective on voting behaviour across different political contexts contributes to classical theories on voter turnout, focused exclusively on electoral processes taking place within state borders (Blais & Dobrzynska, 1998; Fornos et al., 2004). We bring evidence that institutional, socio-economic and political variables, that significantly shape domestic turnout, also influence the electoral mobilization of emigrants in their country of origin elections. Building on this literature, we propose a general model of voter turnout that can be applied to other processes of migrant political mobilization in host/home country politics, and that takes into account the linkages between origin and destination and the interactions between the quality of democratic institutions at home and abroad.

Together the findings of this article show how migrant cross border electoral participation is embedded in the political context in their country of origin and residence as well as the transnational linkages between these countries. This contributes to our further understanding of how migrants are bridging and shaping territorially bounded political processes through their experience of international mobility. In this way our analysis underscores the relevance of further attention to the political geography of the intersection between territorially bounded political processes and the growing phenomena of cross-border movements and linkages. This advances our understanding of not only the situation of the growing number of mobile citizens with multiple political rights, but also which core elements of political socialization and mobilization are resilient or adapt when the spatial and socio-political contexts change.

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Supplementary material

Figure A1. The conditional effect of CoO quality of democracy on CoR quality of democracy for transnational turnout (based on standardised values)

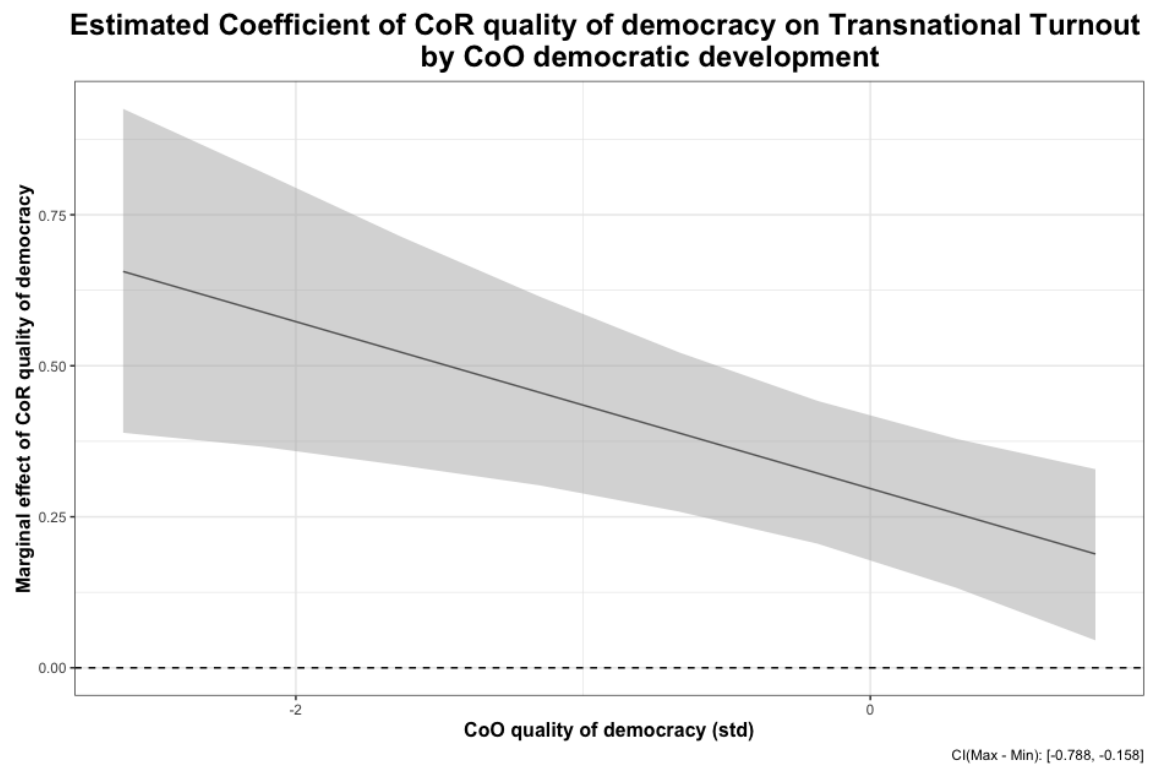


Figure A2. The conditional effect of CoO quality of democracy on political links for transnational turnout (based on standardised values)

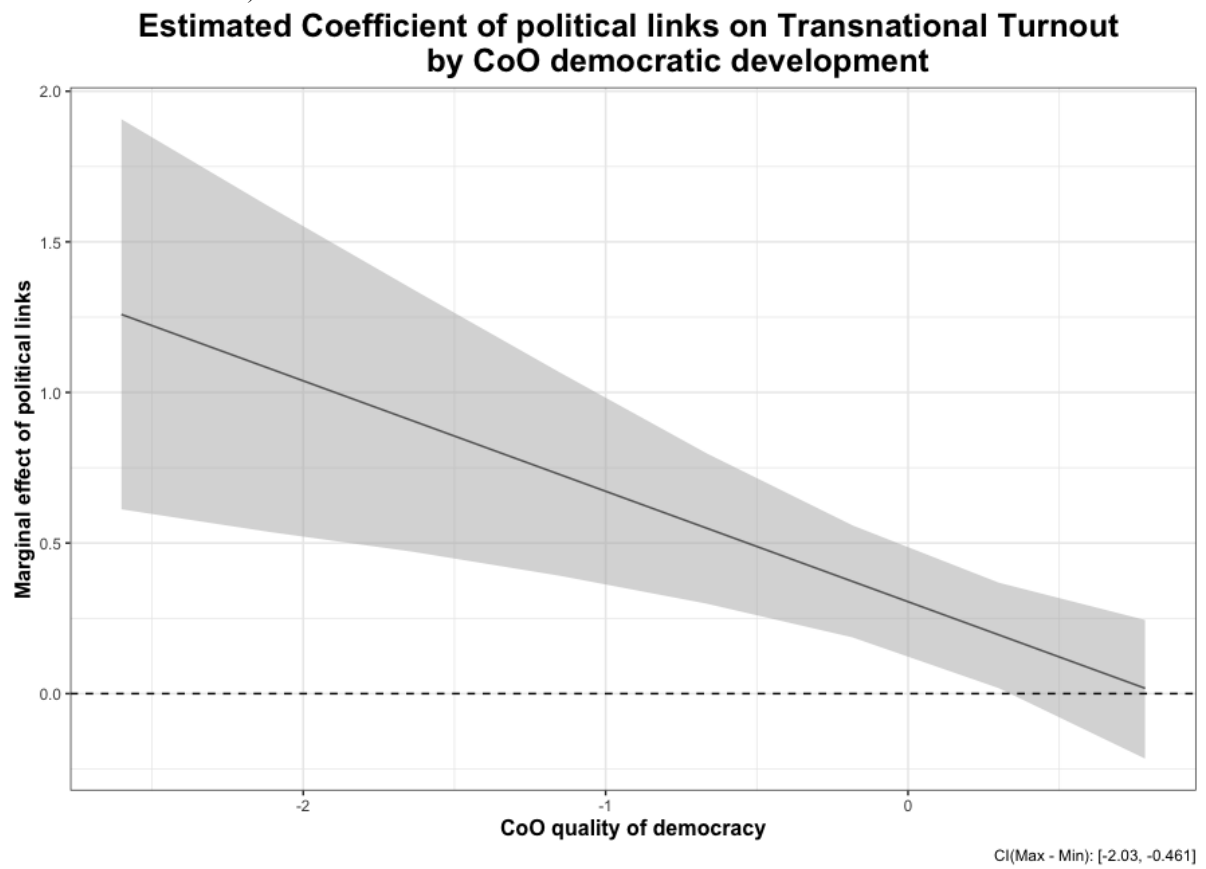


Table A1. Countries and election analysed

Nr.	Country of origin	Election	Year	Emigrant register	Number of CoRs used in the analysis
1	Australia	Parliamentary	2014	No	45
2	Bolivia	Parliamentary	2014	No	22
3	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Parliamentary	2010	No	34
4	Brazil	Presidential	2014	Yes	54
5	Colombia	Presidential	2014	No	42
6	Costa Rica	Presidential	2014	No	29
7	Cote d'Ivoire	Presidential	2010	No	16
8	Croatia	Parliamentary	2011	No	37
9	Czech Republic	Presidential	2013	No	43
10	Dominican Republic	Presidential	2015	No	6
11	Ecuador	Parliamentary	2013	No	33
12	France	Parliamentary	2012	Yes	97
13	Guinea	Presidential	2015	No	11
14	Italy	Parliamentary	2013	Yes	61
15	Latvia	Parliamentary	2014	No	34
16	Mexico	Presidential	2012	Yes	49
17	Mozambique	Parliamentary	2009	No	7
18	New Zealand	Parliamentary	2015	No	8
19	Peru	Presidential	2016	No	42
20	Poland	Parliamentary	2015	No	54
21	Portugal	Presidential	2016	Yes	31
22	Romania	Parliamentary	2012	No	55
23	Turkey	Parliamentary	2015	Yes	37
24	Ukraine	Parliamentary	2014	No	52
25	Venezuela	Presidential	2013	No	38

Table A2. Summary statistics of variables (natural scale)

	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Transnational turnout	0.172	0.181	0	1
Proportional Representation	0.868	0.338	0	1
Registration requirements	1.105	0.584	0	2
Postal vote	0.381	0.486	0	1
CoR quality of democracy	7.642	4.316	-10	10
CoO quality of democracy	4.615	1.657	2	9.1
CoO electoral competition	0.126	0.146	0.003	0.556
CoR GDP pc (log)	9.661	1.210	5.580	11.688
CoO GDP pc (log)	9.391	0.955	6.139	11.122
Emigrant community size (log)	8.136	2.328	1.791	16.376
Emigrant community change	2.355	4.953	0.022	93.957
Bilateral trade (log)	20.331	2.108	13.241	26.905
Political links	0.281	.449	0	1
Remittances pc/ CoO GDP pc	0.234	.300	0	5.251

Table A3. Correlation matrixes

	Transnational turnout	Registration requirements	Postal vote	CoR quality of democracy	CoO quality of democracy	CoO electoral competition	Country of residence GDP
Transnational turnout	1						
Registration requirements	-0.0741*	1					
Postal/e- vote	0.0204	0.0445	1				
CoR quality of democracy	-0.103**	0.0534	-0.0308	1			
CoO quality of democracy	0.000500	-0.0374	0.455***	0.00853	1		
CoO electoral competition	0.0150	-0.160***	-0.356***	0.0284	0.0775*	1	
Country of residence GDP	-0.100**	0.131***	-0.0655*	0.422***	0.0376	0.0484	1
Country of origin GDP	0.0463	-0.161***	0.618***	-0.0396	0.652***	-0.283***	-0.0479
Emigrant community size	-0.188***	0.0142	-0.0601	0.184***	-0.0645*	-0.0237	0.384***
Emigrant community change	-0.0315	0.00744	0.000933	0.0965**	-0.0226	0.0234	0.135***
Bilateral trade	-0.140***	-0.0784*	0.149***	0.113***	0.194***	-0.184***	0.289***
Political links	-0.0704*	-0.00714	-0.0377	0.205***	0.0664*	0.0333	0.157***
Remittances pc/CoO GDP pc	-0.0056	0.0435	-0.1012***	0.0158	-0.0893	0.0328	0.0126

	Country of residence GDP	Country of origin GDP	Emmigr. community size	Emigr. community change	Bilateral trade	Political links	Remittances Per capita
Transnational turnout							
Registration requirements							
Postal/ e-vote							
CoR quality of democracy							
CoO quality of democracy							
CoO electoral competition							
Country of residence GDP	1						
Country of origin GDP	-0.0479	1					
Emigrant community size	0.384***	-0.121***	1				
Emigrant community change	0.135***	-0.0346	0.0954**	1			
Bilateral trade	0.289***	0.309***	0.564***	-0.000997	1		
Political links	0.157***	0.00472	0.198***	0.119***	0.248***	1	
Remittances pc/CoO GDP pc	0.0126	-0.2156	0.0113	-0.0175	-0.0401	-0.0427	1

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table A4. Transnational turnout. Stepwise cross-classified general linear models.

	Null model	CoR polity	CoO polity	Linkages	Institutional	Full model
Quality of democracy in CoR		0.235*** (0.088)	0.236*** (0.088)	0.288*** (0.089)	0.290*** (0.088)	0.304*** (0.073)
Quality of democracy in CoO			-0.347 (0.246)	-0.169 (0.274)	-0.457* (0.272)	-0.468 (0.323)
Electoral competition in CoO				-0.223 (0.298)	0.102 (0.290)	0.075 (0.278)
Bilateral trade				- 0.515*** (0.061)	-0.511*** (0.061)	0.268*** (0.070)
Emigrant remittances				0.261*** (0.052)	0.261*** (0.052)	0.216*** (0.068)
Postal/e-vote					1.802*** (0.624)	1.635*** (0.623)
No registration					-0.815 (1.082)	-0.766 (0.999)
Registration before each election					-2.228*** (0.718)	-2.132*** (0.754)
CoR GDP per capita						0.008 (0.071)
CoO GDP per capita						-0.224 (0.243)
Community size in CoR						-1.086*** (0.063)
Community change						0.146*** (0.036)
Constant	-2.265*** (0.240)	-2.267*** (0.241)	-2.299*** (0.234)	- 2.388*** (0.259)	-2.722*** (0.301)	-2.651*** (0.295)
N	976	972	972	945	945	932
CoO variance	1.23	1.24	1.15	1.42	0.92	0.79
CoR variance	0.59	0.54	0.55	0.62	0.61	0.28
ICC	0.29	0.27	0.26	0.30	0.25	0.19
Marginal R2		0.003	0.020	0.034	0.083	0.128
Conditional R2	0.339	0.338	0.337	0.363	0.363	0.340
AIC	13,797.610	13,757.840	13,757.920	13,421.25	13,416.760	12,991.890
BIC	13,817.140	13,782.240	13,787.200	13,464.91	13,474.970	13,069.290

Note: the number of observations varies between models due to missing values on bilateral trade; CoO=country of origin; CoR=country of residence; Countries=25; *p < .1; **p < .05; ***p < .01